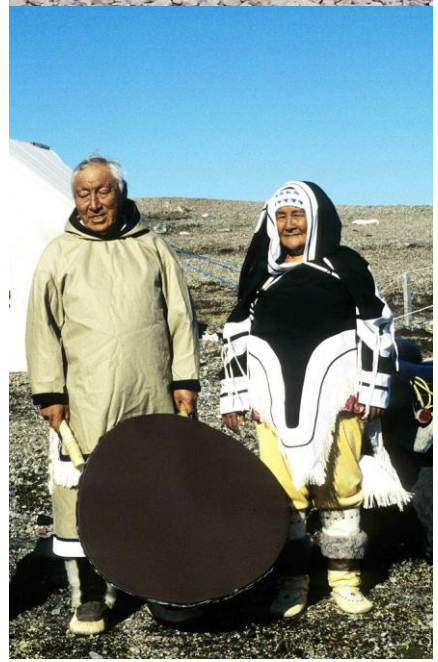
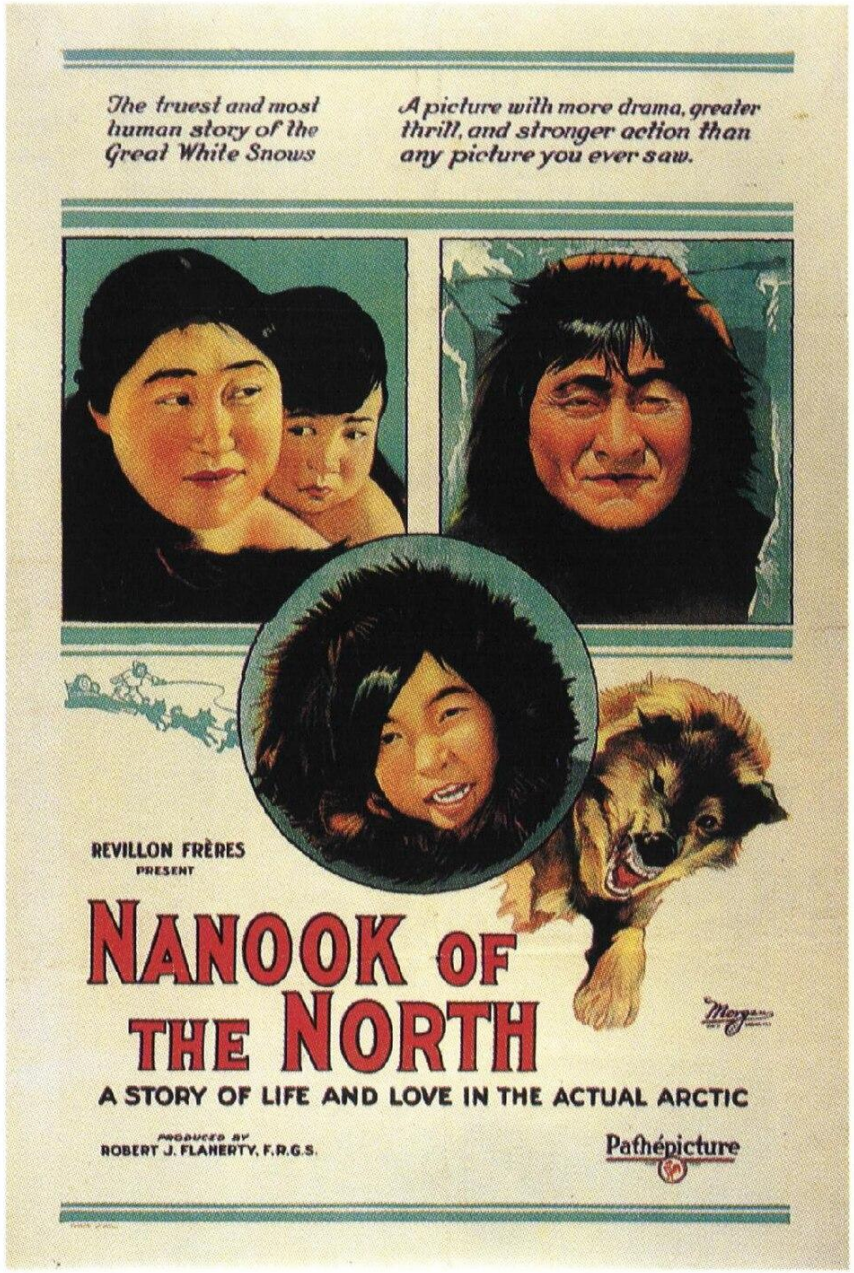
The Royal Canadian Mounted Police




The truest and most human story of the Great White Snows
A picture with more drama, greater thrill, and stronger action than any picture you ever saw.
REVILLON FRÈRES
PRESENT
NANOOK OF THE NORTH
A STORY OF LIFE AND LOVE IN THE ACTUAL ARCTIC
PRODUCED BY
ROBERT J. FLAHERTY, F.R.G.S.
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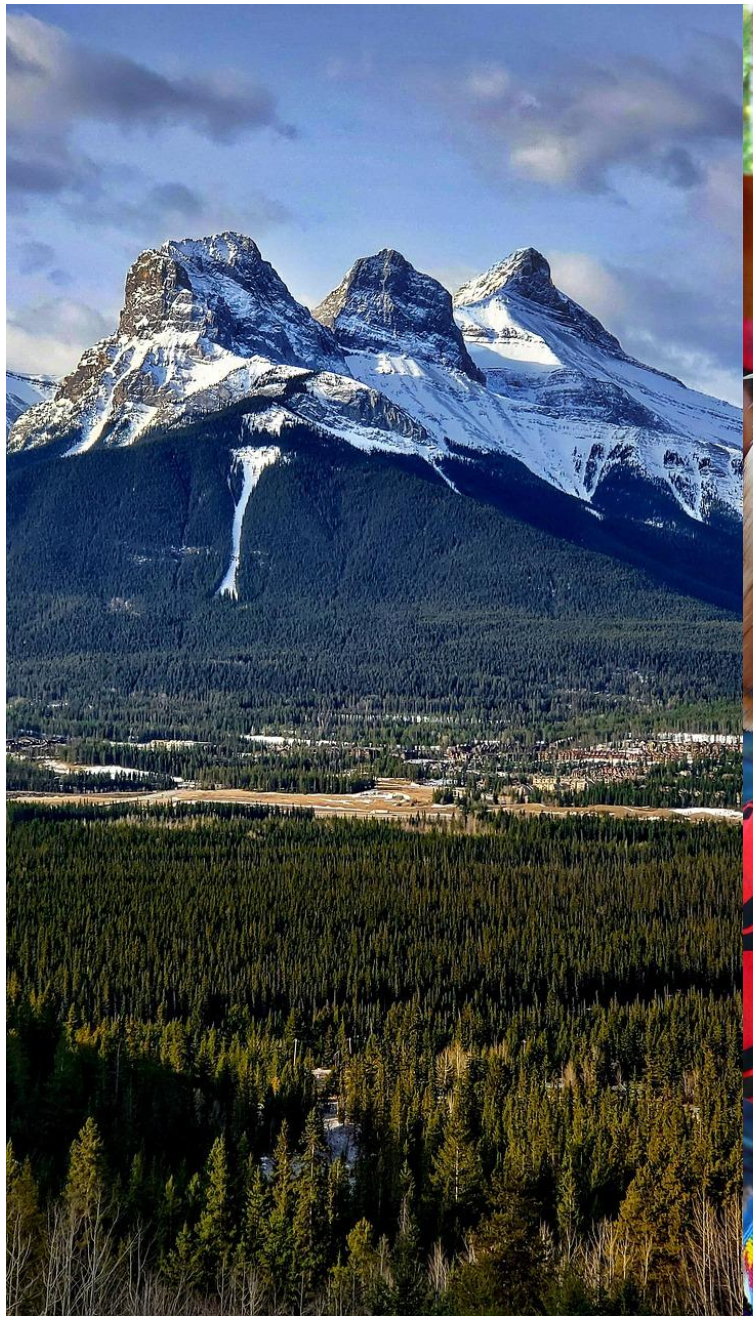

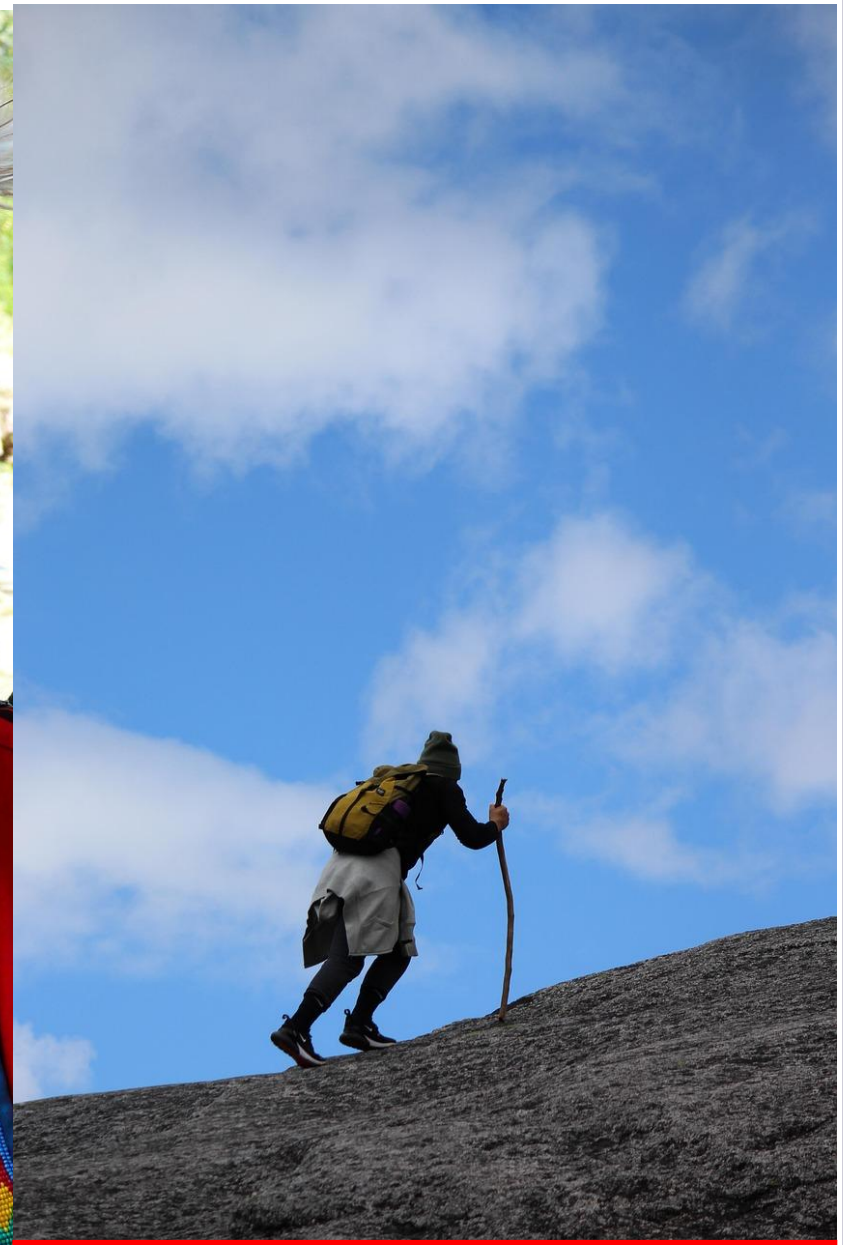

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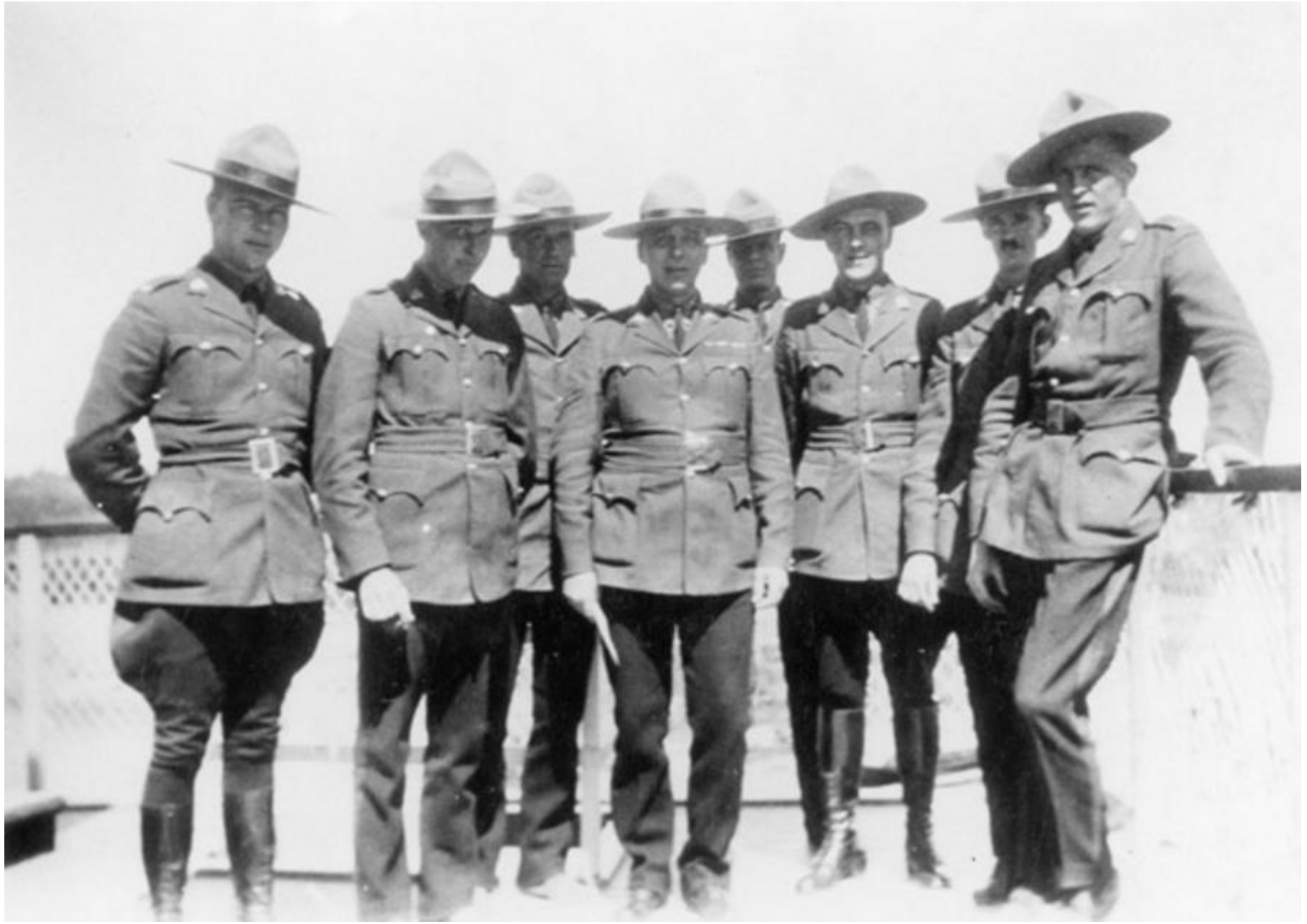
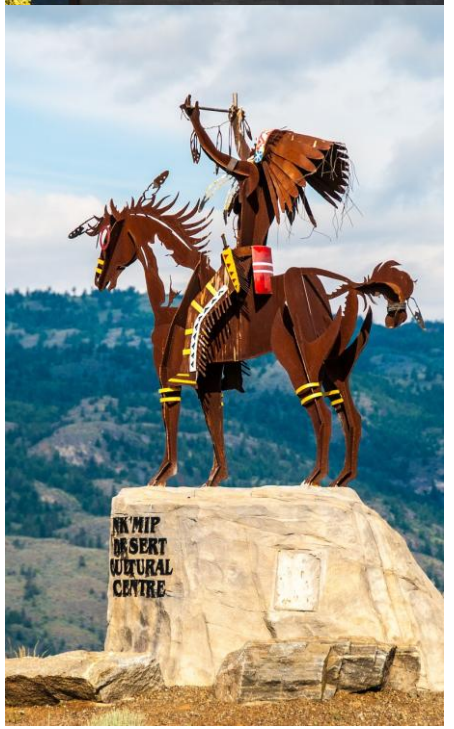


Several RCMP members involved in the hunt for Albert Johnson, 1931.

A lobby card for Renfrew of the Royal Mounted, a 1937 film that depicts a Mountie as its protagonist

Performers dressed as Mounties (left background) during a performance of "The Lumberjack Song" in the Monty Python Live (Mostly) show at O2 Arena in London, 2014.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The Royal Canadian Mounted Poice

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The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP; French: Gendarmerie royale du Canada, GRC) is the national police service of Canada. The RCMP is an agency of the Government of Canada; it also provides police services under contract to 11 provinces and territories (all but Ontario and Quebec), over 150 municipalities, and 600 Indigenous communities. The RCMP is commonly known as the Mounties in English (and colloquially in French as la police montée).

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police was formed in 1920 by the amalgamation of two separate federal police services: the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP), which had been responsible for colonial policing in the Canadian West, but by 1920 was becoming "rapidly obsolete;" and the Dominion Police, which was responsible for federal law enforcement, intelligence, and parliamentary security. The new police service inherited the paramilitary, frontline policing-oriented culture that had governed the RNWMP, which had been modelled after the Royal Irish Constabulary, but much of the RCMP's local policing role had been superseded by provincial and municipal police services.

In 1928, the federal government authorized the RCMP to enter into heavily subsidized contracts with provinces and municipalities, enabling the service to return to its roots in local policing. The federal government paid 60 per cent of the policing costs, while provinces and municipalities paid the remaining 40 per cent. By 1950, eight of the ten Canadian provinces had disbanded their provincial police services in favour of subsidized RCMP policing.

Canadian Forces Military Police members taking part in a training exercise in South Dakota alongside their US counterparts.

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Special constables employed by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation's special constabulary, the Community Safety Unit.

The Calgary Police Service was founded on February 7, 1885, and initially consisted of two constables led by Chief Jack Ingram.

On October 8, 1993, Constable Rick Sonnenberg was preparing a spike strip to stop a stolen vehicle when he was struck by the fleeing motorist and killed. In the wake of his death and fundraising from the Sonnenberg family, the force acquired a helicopter and formed the Helicopter Air Watch for Community Safety (HAWCS) unit in 1995. In 2003, a second helicopter was purchased, expanding the unit.

In 1995, the Calgary Police Commission appointed Christine Silverberg as chief of police, making her the first woman to lead a large police force in Canada. Silverberg served as chief until 2000, when she retired from the police service.

Members of the Calgary Police Service of various ranks. Note the insignia on the epaulettes.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

is a unique organization that provides federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal policing across Canada. It is governed by the RCMP Act and falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Public Safety.

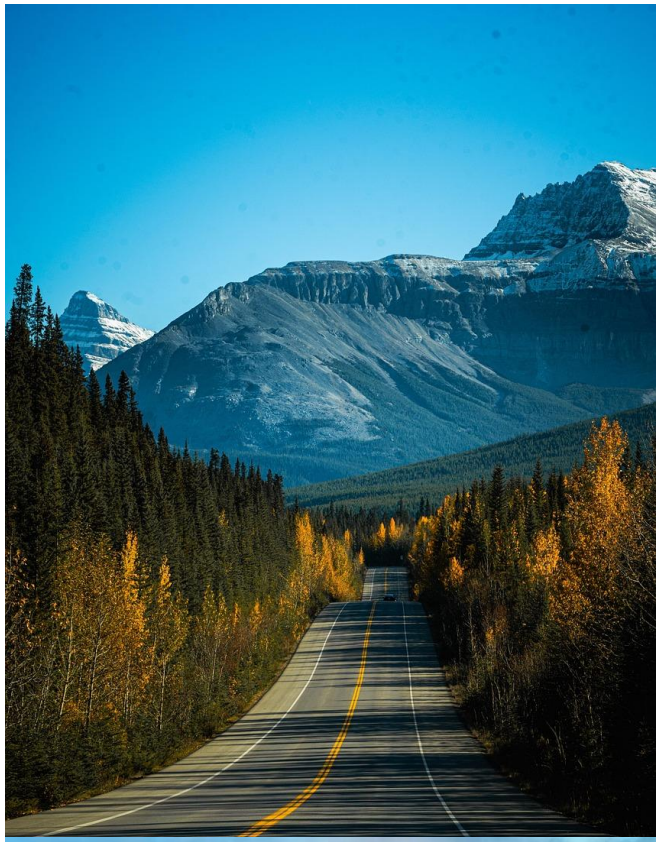
The organization is structured into four main components:

1. Leadership and Headquarters

The RCMP is headed by a Commissioner, who is supported by a Senior Executive Committee based at National Headquarters (NHQ) in Ottawa.

Key leadership positions reporting to the Commissioner include:

Senior Deputy Commissioner:
Acts as second-in-command.
Deputy Commissioners:
Oversee core business lines like Federal Policing, Contract and Indigenous Policing, and Specialized Policing Services.
Chief Officers:
Manage administrative functions such as Human Resources, Finance, and Strategic Policy.



2. Operational Business Lines

The force's work is categorized into three primary mandates:

Federal Policing:

Focuses on national security, border integrity, cybercrime, and transnational organized crime. It is organized into four federal regions (Pacific, Northwest, Central, and Eastern).

Contract and Indigenous Policing:

Provides frontline police services under contract to all provinces and territories except Ontario and Quebec, as well as to over 600 Indigenous communities.

Specialized Policing Services (SPS):

Provides technical support like forensic laboratories, the Canadian Police College, and the Canadian Firearms Program.

3. Regional and Divisional Structure

The RCMP is geographically divided into 15 Divisions, each led by a Commanding Officer. Most divisions are designated by a letter and roughly correspond to provincial or territorial boundaries:

"E" Division: British Columbia (largest division).

"K" Division: Alberta.

"Depot" Division: The RCMP Training Academy located in Regina, Saskatchewan.

National Division: Based in Ottawa, focusing on sensitive and international investigations.

4. Ranks

The RCMP follows a paramilitary rank structure. In descending order, the primary ranks are:

Commissioner

Deputy Commissioner

Assistant Commissioner

Chief Superintendent

Superintendent

Inspector

Non-Commissioned Officers: Sergeant Major, Staff Sergeant, Sergeant, Corporal

Constable (the primary frontline rank)

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), formerly the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP), has been a central figure in Canadian history for over 150 years, playing a major role in the development of the Canadian West, the enforcement of federal law, and the handling of several high-profile criminal investigations.

Here are some of the most famous cases and historical events where the RCMP had a significant impact:

Famous Historical Cases and Investigations

The "Mad Trapper of Rat River" (1932): In one of the most famous manhunts in Canadian history, the RCMP pursued a mysterious man known as Albert Johnson across the Yukon and Northwest Territories. After a weeks-long chase, which included the first use of aircraft in a Canadian police search, Mounties "got their man" in a final shootout.

The "Mad Trapper of Rat River" refers to an unidentified fugitive who led the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) on a massive, seven-week manhunt across the Northwest Territories and Yukon, Canada, during the winter of 1931-1932. The event became famous for the man's extraordinary survival skills in extreme Arctic conditions (-40°C or lower) and because it marked the first time the RCMP used airplanes and radio in a pursuit.

What Happened (1931-1932):

The Incident: In July 1931, a man calling himself Albert Johnson settled in the Rat River area. Local First Nations trappers complained to the RCMP that he was tampering with their traps.

Initial Shootout (Dec 31, 1931): Constable Alfred King went to check on Johnson. When King tried to force entry, Johnson fired through the door, wounding him. A larger RCMP posse returned on January 9, 1932, and used dynamite to destroy the cabin, but Johnson survived and escaped.

Commissioner Bob Paulson speaking at the opening of the 65th Glengarry Highland Games in 2012

The Manhunt & Death of a Mountie (Jan-Feb 1932):

During a massive search involving dogsleds, the suspect displayed incredible wilderness stamina. On January 30, a gunfight took place in which Johnson killed Constable Edgar Millen. Johnson then escaped over a 7,000-foot mountain pass during a blizzard.
Final Stand (Feb 17, 1932): Bush pilot "Wop" May was hired to track him from the air. The posse cornered Johnson on the frozen Eagle River in the Yukon. Johnson was shot and killed after a final gunfight that lasted only minutes.

Key Details and Mystery:

Identity: Despite fingerprints and dental records, the true identity of "Albert Johnson" has never been determined. Forensic, dental, and DNA tests later suggested he might have been of Scandinavian or American origin, with high-quality dental work suggesting an affluent background.

The Name: "Albert Johnson" is believed to be a pseudonym.

The Cache: When he was killed, he was found to have over $2,400 in Canadian cash, gold teeth, a compass, fishhooks, and a dead squirrel.

Legacy: The story inspired movies (like 1981's Death Hunt), books, and songs, and is a staple of Canadian folklore. His remains were exhumed for a 2009 documentary, Hunt for the Mad Trapper, which failed to identify him but ruled out several key suspects.

Capture of Bill Miner (1906):

Known as the "Gentleman Bandit," Bill Miner was a successful train robber who eluded American police. After robbing a Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) train near Kamloops, BC, the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP) successfully captured him, marking a major success for the force in Western Canada.

Bill Miner, known as the "Gentleman Bandit" and "The Grey Fox," was captured in May 1906 following a disastrous, botched train robbery near Kamloops, British Columbia. After a massive, multi-day manhunt, Miner and his accomplices were cornered by the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP) while trying to flee through the wilderness.

Here is what happened during the capture and trial of Bill Miner in 1906:

1. The Botched 1906 Robbery

The Incident: On May 8, 1906, Miner and two accomplices, Thomas "Shorty" Dunn and Louis Colquhoun, held up the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) train at "Ducks" (now Monte Creek), near Kamloops, BC.
The Failure: The gang intended to steal a large amount of gold, but in a panicked blunder, they disconnected the wrong car. They ended up with only $15.50 in cash and a bottle of liver pills.
The Escape: The botched robbery left them on foot in the Canadian wilderness, forced to abandon their horses.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

2. The Capture (May 1906)

The Manhunt:
This robbery triggered one of the largest manhunts in British Columbia history, involving provincial police, the RNWMP, Indigenous trackers, and special constables.
The Arrest: On May 14, 1906, after several days on the run, the posse found the trio at a camp near Douglas Lake.

Surrender:
While "Shorty" Dunn tried to resist and was shot in the leg, Miner and Colquhoun surrendered without a fight.Evidence: The bottle of pills taken in the robbery proved to be key evidence against them.

3. Trial and Sentence

Public Sympathy:
Despite the robbery, many in the public admired Miner because he was polite ("gentlemanly") and targeted the unpopular CPR railway.

Conviction:
Miner was tried in Kamloops, where an American prison official confirmed his identity as the notorious Bill Miner. He was sentenced to life imprisonment at the B.C. Penitentiary in New Westminster on June 2, 1906.

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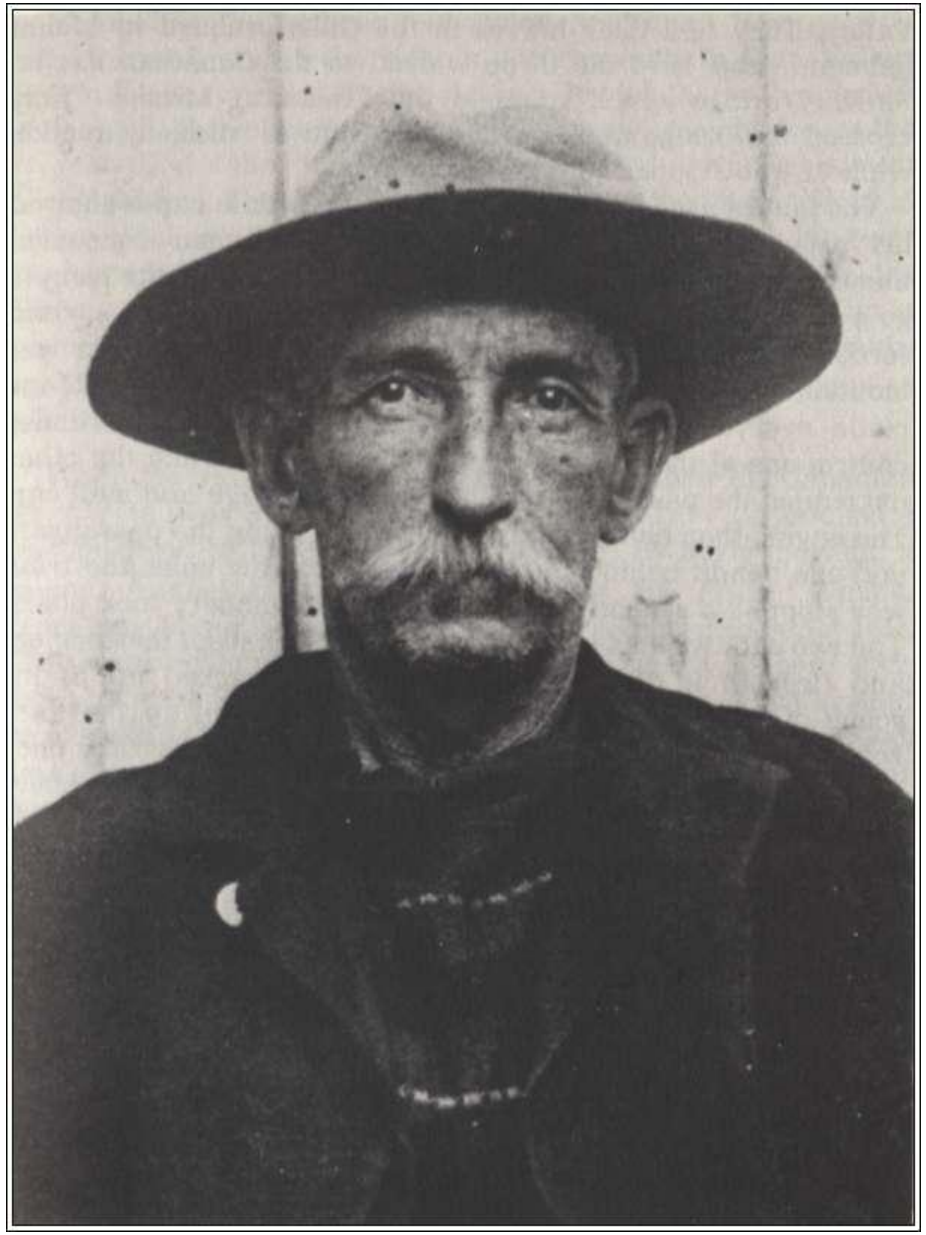
4. Later Events (1907–1913)

Spectacular Escape: Miner did not stay in prison long. On August 8, 1907, he managed to escape from the B.C. Penitentiary by digging a hole under the fence.

Return to the U.S.:
He fled back to the United States, where he continued robbing trains.
Final Imprisonment & Death: In 1911, he was caught in Georgia. After escaping twice, he was recaptured and died in a Georgia prison in 1913, reportedly from drinking tainted water during his final escape.

The 1982 film "The Grey Fox" is based on this period of his life in Canada.

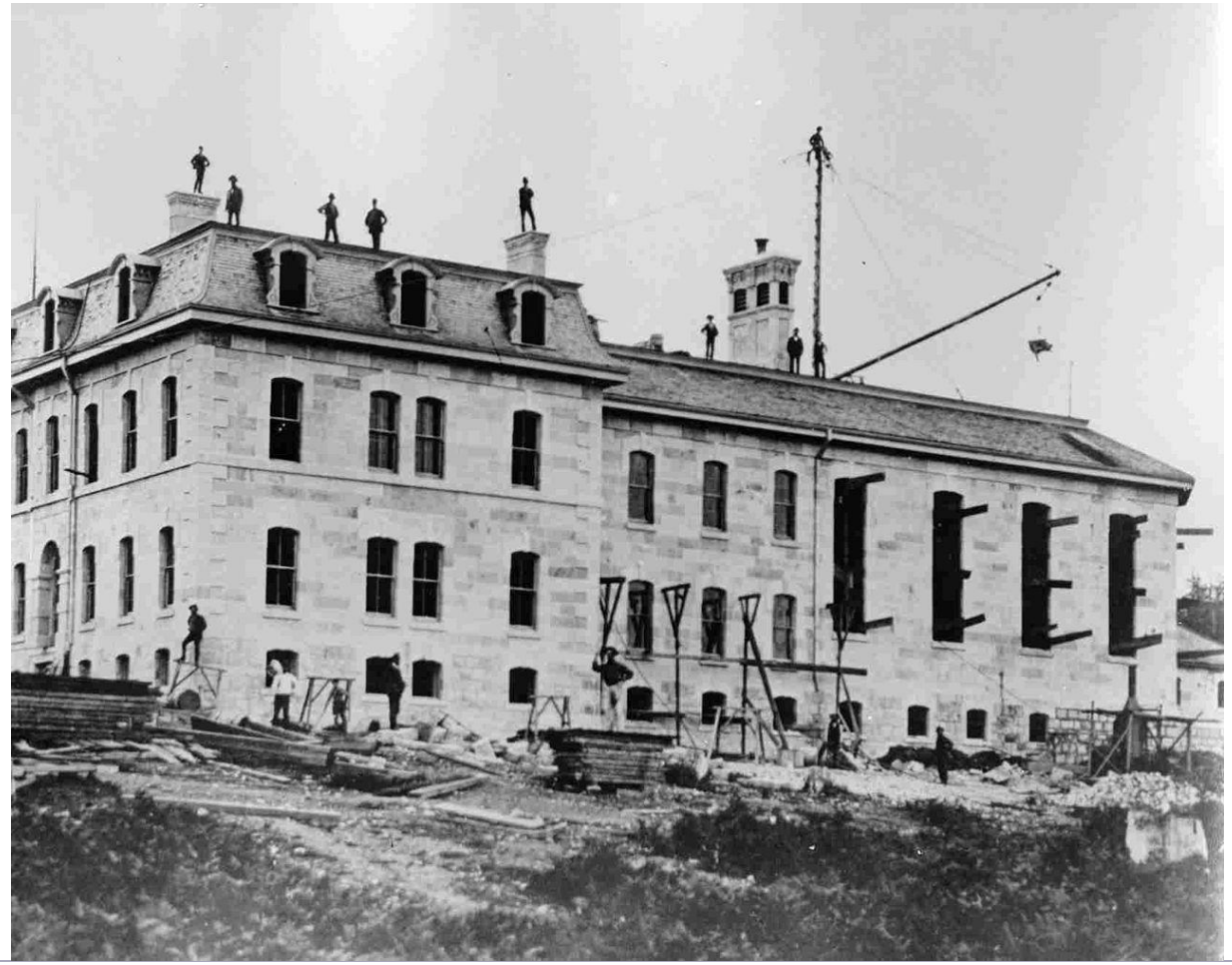


Ezra Allen Miner (1847 – September 2, 1913), more popularly known as Bill Miner, was an American bandit, originally from Kentucky, who served several prison terms for stagecoach robbery. Known for his unusual politeness while committing robberies, he was widely nicknamed the Grey Fox, Gentleman Robber or the Gentleman Bandit. He is reputed to have been the originator of the phrase "Hands up! Legend has it that Bill Miner admonished his cohorts to fire their guns when in danger of capture but "do not kill a man".

Miner was born in Jackson County, Kentucky in 1847. He never legally changed his first name, but regarded William Allen Miner as his true name throughout most of his life. He was arrested for the first time in 1866 in San Joaquin County, California and served time there. He was shortly released but served more time at Placer County, California and later at Calaveras County, California. He was discharged in 1880. He then formed a partnership with Bill Leroy (as W. A. Morgan) to rob a stagecoach. Leroy was caught and lynched, but Miner escaped. He was later caught for another robbery in Tuolumne County, California and was released from San Quentin in 1901.

While serving time in the B.C. Penitentiary, Miner escaped in 1907 and was never recaptured in Canada. He moved back to the United States, becoming once again involved in robberies in the South at Gainesville in 1909. There, he served more prison time, and escaped twice.[1][6]

He died in the prison farm at Milledgeville, Georgia, of gastritis, contracted from drinking brackish water during his previous escape attempt.



The British Columbia Penitentiary (BC Penitentiary, commonly referred to as the BC Pen and the Pen) was a federal maximum security prison located in New Westminster, British Columbia, Canada. The BC Penitentiary operated for 102 years, from 1878 until it was decommissioned in 1980. It was the first federal penal institution west of Manitoba.

BC Penitentiary under construction in 1877

The Robert Pickton Investigation (1997–2002):

The investigation into serial killer Robert Pickton, who murdered women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, was one of the largest in Canadian history. While criticized for delays, the Coquitlam RCMP and Vancouver Police Department eventually arrested Pickton in 1997, leading to a massive investigation involving forensic analysis of his farm.

The investigation into serial killer Robert Pickton (1997–2002)

is widely regarded as one of the most significant law enforcement failures in Canadian history. During this period, Pickton lured dozens of vulnerable women—many of them Indigenous and from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside—to his pig farm in Port Coquitlam, where he murdered them.

Key Events of the Investigation (1997–2002)

1997 Attempted Murder:

In March 1997, Pickton attacked a sex worker at his farm. She escaped and both were hospitalized; Pickton was charged with attempted murder. However, the BC Prosecution Service stayed the charges in 1998, citing the victim's perceived "instability" as a witness.

Ignored Tips (1998–1999):

Despite the 1997 attack, police failed to prioritize Pickton as a suspect even as more women vanished. In 1999, the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) received a tip that Pickton had human flesh in a freezer, but it was not thoroughly pursued.

Robert William Pickton (October 24, 1949 – May 31, 2024), also known as the Pig Farmer Killer or the Butcher, was a Canadian pig farmer and serial killer. He is believed to have murdered at least 26 women, many of them sex workers from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. He confessed to forty-nine murders to an undercover RCMP officer. In 2007, he was convicted on six counts of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison with no possibility of parole for 25 years—the longest possible sentence for second-degree murder under Canadian law at the time.

In 2010, the Crown attorney officially stayed the remaining 20 murder charges, allowing previously unrevealed information to be made available to the public, including that Pickton previously had a 1997 attempted murder charge dropped. Crown prosecutors reasoned that staying the additional charges made the most sense, since Pickton was already serving the maximum sentence allowable.

The discovery of Pickton's crimes sparked widespread outrage and forced the Canadian government to acknowledge the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, with the British Columbia provincial government forming the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry to examine the role of the police in the matter. Pickton died in 2024 after being attacked in prison by another inmate.[

Establishment of the Task Force (2001):
As disappearances spiked, the RCMP and VPD finally formed the "Missing Women Task Force" (Project Evenhanded) in April 2001 to coordinate investigations.

The 2002 Arrest: On February 5, 2002, a junior officer executed a search warrant on Pickton's farm regarding illegal firearms. During the search, investigators discovered personal items and remains belonging to missing women. Pickton was arrested and eventually charged with 27 counts of first-degree murder.

Major Investigative Failures

A subsequent public inquiry (The Oppal Inquiry) identified several "blatant failures":

Systemic Bias:
Investigators did not take the disappearances seriously because the victims were marginalized women, often Indigenous or struggling with addiction.

Jurisdictional Conflict:
Poor communication between the VPD (who handled the missing person reports) and the Coquitlam RCMP (who had jurisdiction over Pickton's farm) allowed him to evade detection.

Failure to Warn:
Police failed to issue a public warning that a serial predator was active in the Downtown Eastside.

Aftermath and Conviction

In 2007, Pickton was convicted of six counts of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison. Though he confessed to an undercover officer that he had killed 49 women, the remaining charges were stayed to avoid the massive cost of further trials since he was already serving the maximum possible sentence. Robert Pickton died in May 2024 after being assaulted by another inmate in prison.

The "Lost Patrol" (1911): A tragic event where an RCMP patrol led by Inspector Francis Fitzgerald perished while attempting the annual mail delivery from Fort McPherson to Dawson City. This case prompted significant reforms in northern police procedures, including the mandatory use of Indigenous guides.

In December 1910, Inspector Francis Fitzgerald led a four-man Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP) patrol to deliver mail from Fort McPherson to Dawson City. Intending to set a speed record, they traveled light with only 15 dogs and 30 days of food for the 764 km (475 mile) journey.

What Happened?

The Critical Mistake:
Fitzgerald dismissed their experienced Dene guide, Esau George, after crossing the Richardson Range, relying instead on Special Constable Sam Carter. However, Carter had only traveled the route once before—in the opposite direction—and failed to find the crucial trail to Dawson.

Lost in the Wild:
The patrol spent weeks wandering in temperatures as low as -62°F (-52°C). By mid-January, lost and starving, they turned back toward Fort McPherson.
Desperate Measures: They eventually resorted to eating their sled dogs and leather harnesses to stay alive.
The End:
All four men perished from starvation and exposure just 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the safety of Fort McPherson. One member, Constable Taylor, died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, presumably to end his suffering.

William John Duncan Dempster (21 October 1876 – 25 October 1964) was a member of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) in the Yukon Territory during the early 20th century. He led an expedition which found the remains of members of the Lost Patrol, three NWMP officers and an ex-NWMP officer guide who disappeared on the trail between Fort McPherson and Dawson City in the winter of 1910–11. The Dempster Highway in northern Canada is named for him.

Dempster was born in Wales on 21 October 1876. He emigrated to Canada as a young man. In 1897, he joined the North-West Mounted Police and was posted to the Yukon the following year. He served in various communities in the north for the next ten years. In 1907, he began participating in the annual mid-winter dog sled mail patrols between the NWMP detachments in **Dawson City and Fort McPherson, a trip of 800 kilometres (500 mi) through the wilderness.**

In the winter of 1910–11, the mail patrol was commanded by Inspector Francis Joseph Fitzgerald. The patrol included Fitzgerald, Constables George Kinney and Richard Taylor, and former constable Samuel Carter as guide. They left Fort McPherson on December 21, 1910. The time required for the trip depended heavily on the weather; previous patrols had taken as few as 14 days and as many as 56 for the one-way journey. Fitzgerald took enough supplies for 30 days and may have been seeking to set a new speed record for the trip. Weather conditions on the trail were poor, with heavy snow and low temperatures. Carter, who had only traveled the route in the opposite direction, was not able to find the path through the Richardson Mountains.

Corporal (later Inspector) William John Duncan Dempster

Dempster's patrol at Dawson City, February 1911

When the patrol failed to arrive in Dawson City by late February 1911, Corporal Dempster was dispatched with Constables J.F. Fyfe and F. Turner and First Nations guide Charlie Steward to find and rescue them. They departed Dawson on February 28. Dempster was initially confident of finding the patrol, given Fitzgerald's experience in the north.

Dempster's patrol soon found evidence of trouble, including abandoned dog harnesses and gear, and campsites that showed Fitzgerald's patrol had lost their way. They later found parts of dog carcasses which indicated that the lost men had resorted to eating their sled animals. On March 22 and 23, the bodies of the four missing men were discovered 55 kilometres (34 mi) from Fort McPherson. Dempster's patrol continued to Fort McPherson and then returned to Dawson City. On the return to Dawson, Dempster set a new record, covering the distance in 11 days.

He eventually reached the rank of Inspector, retiring from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (successor to the NWMP) in 1934. At his retirement he was considered to be "the best trail man in the Yukon". Dempster married Catherine Smith in 1926. They had one son and one daughter.

Dempster died October 25, 1964, at the age of 88. Shortly before his death, he was advised that the highway being constructed from Dawson to Aklavik would be named in his honour. The Dempster Highway, eventually routed to Inuvik instead of Aklavik, opened in 1979.

Reforms and Legacy

The tragedy was discovered by a search party led by Corporal William Dempster in March 1911.

The fallout led to immediate and permanent changes in northern policing:

Mandatory Guides:
All future patrols over unknown routes were required to be accompanied by experienced Indigenous guides.

Food Caches:
A network of supply caches and emergency cabins was established along the route.

Better Markers: The trail was clearly marked to prevent future disorientation.
Today, the Dempster Highway—which follows much of the ill-fated route—is named after the corporal who found the patrol.

Francis Joseph Fitzgerald (12 April 1869 – 11 February 1911) was a Canadian who became a celebrated Boer War veteran and the first commander of the Royal North-West Mounted Police detachment at Herschel Island in the Western Arctic (1903). From December 1910 until February 1911, he led a mail patrol from Fort McPherson southward to Dawson City. When the patrol did not arrive in time, a search party, led by Corporal William Dempster, was sent from Dawson City and found the bodies of Fitzgerald and the other patrol members. The trip became known as "The Lost Patrol" and as "one of Yukon's greatest tragedies.

Air India Flight 182 Bombing (1985):

While the initial response was criticized, the RCMP conducted a long, complex investigation into the terrorist bombing of the Air India flight, which was the largest mass murder in Canadian history at the time.

On June 23, 1985, Air India Flight 182, flying from Canada to India, was destroyed by a suitcase bomb planted by Canadian-based Sikh separatists, killing all 329 people on board (mostly Canadians) over the Atlantic Ocean. A related bomb exploded at Japan's Narita Airport, targeting another plane.

Key details regarding the incident include:

Target:
Revenge for the 1984 Indian army storming of the Golden Temple.

Investigation:
The RCMP led a long, complex investigation, but it was initially criticized for missing warnings and destroying evidence.

Perpetrators:
Talwinder Singh Parmar was identified as a leader, but died before facing charges. Inderjit Singh Reyat was the only person convicted, serving time for manslaughter.

Outcome:
Following the 2005 acquittal of two other suspects, a 2006 public inquiry was ordered, highlighting serious failures in intelligence and policing.

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Air India Flight 182 was a scheduled international flight from Toronto Pearson International Airport (as Air India Flight 181) to Sahar International Airport with regular Mirabel-London-Delhi stops. On the morning of June 23, 1985, the Boeing 747-237 serving the Montreal-London segment exploded near the coast of Ireland from a bomb planted by Sikh terrorists. **All 329 people on board were killed including 268 Canadian citizens, 27 British citizens, and 22 Indian citizens. The** bombing of Air India Flight 182 is the worst terrorist attack in Canadian history and was the world's deadliest act of aviation terrorism until the September 11 attacks in 2001. It remains the deadliest aviation incident in the history of Air India, and the deadliest no-survivor hull loss of a single Boeing 747.

Irish Naval Service recovering bodies from the Air India Flight 182 disaster

Significant Historical and Social Impact

The "March West" (1874):

The NWMP was formed in 1873 to establish law and order in the Canadian West, particularly to combat the illegal whiskey trade. In 1874, they traveled 1,500 kilometers to present-day Alberta, establishing Fort Macleod and solidifying Canadian sovereignty in the region.

The Northwest Rebellion/Resistance (1885):

The NWMP played an active role in the military campaigns during the 1885 rebellion, notably in the fighting at Batoche, where they acted as a paramilitary force.

The Winnipeg General Strike (1919):

Members of the RNWMP were involved in breaking up the 1919 strike in Winnipeg, which became known as "Bloody Saturday." This action marked a controversial period where the force was used to break labour disputes.

Boundary Trail Heritage Region sign on Highway 83 in the Municipality of Two Borders

The Boundary Commission Trail (French: Sentier de la Commission de délimitation) was a trail in western Canada used by the North American Boundary Commission to survey the Canada–United States border starting in 1872. The North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) also used the trail in their March West in 1874. The trail no longer exists, but is commemorated with a modern highway route that approximately follows the trail used by the NWMP and is called the Red Coat Trail.

American and Canadian surveyors worked together in the difficult task of surveying the border, which was agreed upon in the Treaty of 1818 to be the 49th parallel. They met in September 1872 in Pembina, Dakota Territory, where they spent the winter before heading out in the spring of 1873 to begin surveying and placing markers along the route starting at the Lake of the Woods. The winter of 1873–74 was spent in Willow Bunch, North-West Territories. In the spring they continued their work and the last marker was placed on 8 August 1874 at Waterton Lake. Waterton Lake straddles the 49th parallel in present-day Alberta and Montana.

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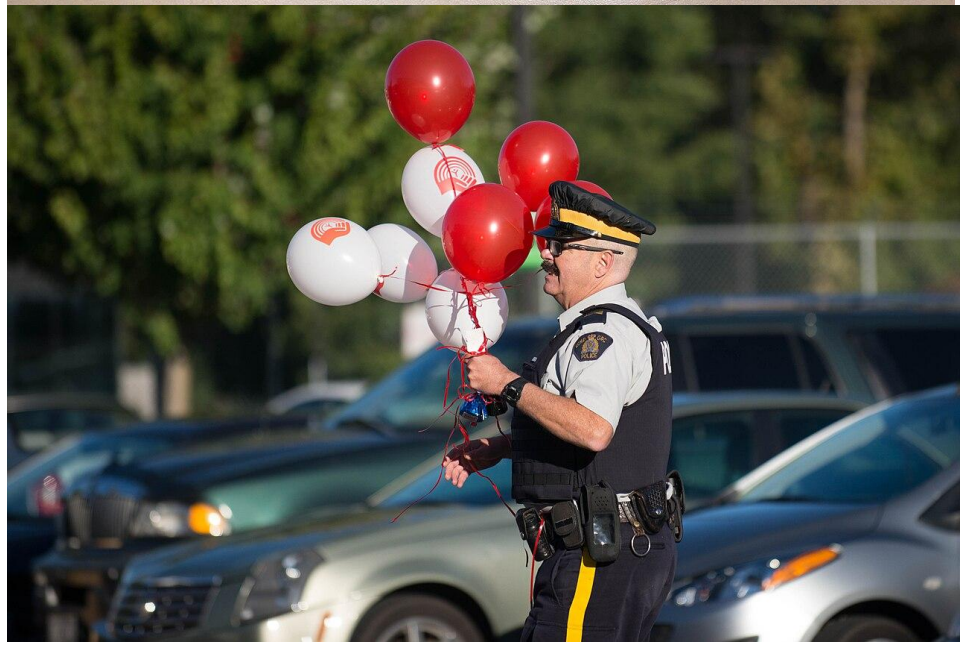

The March West of 1874 was the debut mission of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP). It was a grueling, poorly planned expedition intended to expel American whiskey traders and assert Canadian sovereignty over the newly acquired North-West Territories.

Key Events of the March

The Departure: On July 8, 1874, Commissioner George French led a force of 275 men, 310 horses, and 143 oxen out of Fort Dufferin, Manitoba.

Arduous Conditions: The journey was plagued by extreme heat, lack of water, swarms of grasshoppers, and disease. Most of the horses died of starvation or exhaustion, and the men's uniforms were eventually reduced to rags.

The Search for Fort Whoop-Up: The primary goal was to capture Fort Whoop-Up, a notorious whiskey trading post. However, the force initially got lost, arriving at the wrong river junction in September only to find a "desert" instead of a fort.

Meeting Jerry Potts: Near the U.S. border, the NWMP hired Jerry Potts, a legendary Métis scout. Potts successfully guided them to Fort Whoop-Up, which they found abandoned by the traders who had fled upon hearing of the Mounties' approach.

Founding Fort Macleod: In October 1874, Assistant Commissioner James Macleod established the first permanent outpost, Fort Macleod, on an island in the Oldman River.

POLICE
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Impact and Legacy

The march is often called a "monumental fiasco" of planning but an "epic of endurance" for the men. By establishing a physical presence, the NWMP effectively ended the illegal whiskey trade, which had been devastating Indigenous communities like the Blackfoot Confederacy. This established a foundation of trust that later facilitated the negotiation of Treaty 7 and secured the region for Canadian settlement against American expansionism.

The illegal whiskey trade and the life of Jerry Potts are two of the most dramatic chapters in early Western Canadian history.

The Whiskey Trade: "Firewater" on the Plains
Between 1869 and 1874, American traders from Montana moved north into the unpoliced Canadian prairies, establishing dozens of fortified posts—most notoriously Fort Whoop-Up.

The Deadly Recipe: The "whiskey" was rarely actual whiskey. It was a toxic "rotgut" mixture of alcohol, water, chewing tobacco (for color), red pepper (for "bite"), and sometimes even gunpowder or red ink.

Social Devastation: The trade was predatory. A cup of this mixture could be traded for a high-quality buffalo robe (worth about $12 at the time). In just five years, it caused widespread alcoholism, violence, and starvation, nearly destroying the Blackfoot Confederacy.

The Breaking Point: Reports of an American flag flying over Canadian soil at Fort Whoop-Up and the 1873 Cypress Hills Massacre (where traders killed at least 20 Nakoda people) forced the Canadian government to act, leading to the creation of the NWMP.

RCMP

Jerry Potts:

The "Unsung Architect" of the West

Jerry Potts (Indigenous name: Ky-yo-kosi or Bear Child) was a legendary Métis-Scots scout who became the NWMP's most vital asset.

A Personal Vendetta:

Potts originally worked for whiskey traders as a hunter, but he declared a personal war against them after his mother was murdered by a man drunk on "firewater" in 1871.

Saving the NWMP:

When the "March West" arrived in 1874, the Mounties were lost and starving. Potts was hired at $90/month—three times a constable's salary. He possessed an "uncanny sense of locality," guiding the force to water and grass when they were on the brink of collapse.

Diplomatic Bridge:

Potts was the crucial link between the NWMP and Chief Crowfoot of the Blackfoot. He taught the "Red Coats" Indigenous etiquette and ensured that the entry of the police was seen as a move toward peace rather than an invasion.

Legacy:

Potts served the force for 22 years. While he was a legendary scout, he was famously "abysmal" as a literal translator; he once summarized a governor's long, flowery speech to a chief as simply: "He says he's damned glad you're here".

Continued Rampage (April 19): Resuming at 6:30 AM, Wortman traveled over 90km, killing people in Wentworth, Debert, and Shubenacadie.
Police Casualties: Wortman ambushed and killed Cst. Heidi Stevenson after a head-on collision and wounded Cst. Chad Morrison.
Death of the Perpetrator: Wortman was eventually spotted by two tactical officers at a gas station in Enfield and was killed in a shootout at 11:26 AM.

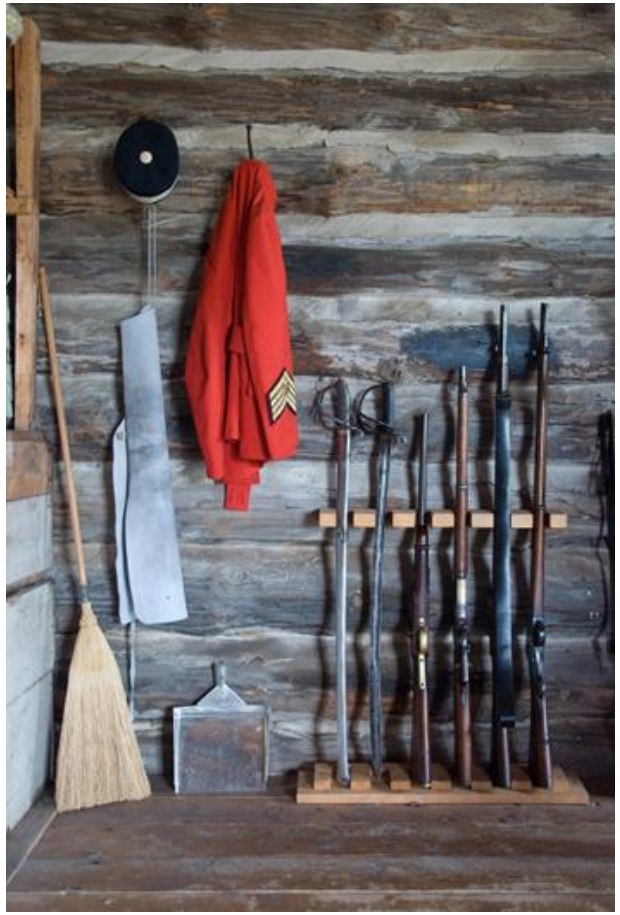
Key Criticisms and Inquiry Findings

The Mass Casualty Commission (MCC), a joint federal-provincial inquiry, released its Final Report (Turning the Tide Together) in March 2023, identifying "widespread failures" by the RCMP:
Failure to Use Alert Ready: Despite having the technology to send an emergency broadcast to all cellphones, the RCMP relied solely on Twitter to warn the public. The report dismissed the "myth" that alerts cause public panic as a valid reason for the delay.

Information Lag: Police knew about the replica cruiser by approximately 10:30 PM on April 18, but did not warn the public about the disguise until 10:17 AM the following morning—nearly 12 hours later.
Missed Red Flags: Authorities had received several reports in the decade leading up to the attack regarding Wortman's illegal firearms, domestic violence, and threats to "kill a cop," yet no significant action was taken.
Onslow Fire Hall Incident: During the manhunt, two RCMP officers mistook an emergency official for the gunman and opened fire on the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall. They missed but failed to check on the occupants before continuing.
Lack of Organization: The inquiry found the response was poorly organized, with significant gaps in command and a failure to account for unmapped exit routes in Portapique.

Aftermath and Reforms

The tragedy led to an immediate federal ban on 1,500 models of "assault-style" firearms. The MCC issued 130 recommendations, including a fundamental review of the RCMP's role in contract policing and improved handling of intimate partner violence. A Progress Monitoring Committee was established to ensure these reforms are implemented.



Modern and Controversial Cases

2020 Nova Scotia Attacks:

A gunman disguised as an RCMP officer killed 22 people in Nova Scotia, the deadliest shooting rampage in Canadian history. The response by the RCMP was heavily criticized for lacking transparency, failing to use the Alert Ready system to warn the public, and for its slow response time, leading to a public inquiry.

The 2020 Nova Scotia attacks were a 13-hour killing spree on April 18–19, 2020, resulting in 22 deaths, including a pregnant woman and an RCMP officer. The perpetrator, 51-year-old Gabriel Wortman, was a denturist who used a replica RCMP cruiser and uniform to evade and deceive victims and police.

What Happened:

Timeline of the Attacks

Initial Assault (April 18, ~10:00 PM): The violence began in Portapique after Wortman assaulted his partner. He set fire to multiple properties and began shooting neighbors.

Overnight Escape: While police established a perimeter around Portapique, Wortman escaped via a dirt road at approximately 10:45 PM—just 19 minutes after the first officers arrived. He spent the night hiding in a welding shop parking lot.

Maher Arar Case (2002–2006):

The RCMP provided faulty information to U.S. authorities that led to the detention and torture of Canadian citizen Maher Arar in Syria. This caused a major scandal and prompted an official apology from the RCMP Commissioner, who admitted the force's actions contributed to the injustice.

The Maher Arar case (2002–2006) involved the wrongful detention and "extraordinary rendition" of a Syrian-born Canadian citizen, Maher Arar, based on inaccurate intelligence provided by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to U.S. authorities. Arar was detained in New York, sent to Syria, and tortured for nearly a year before being released without charges.

1. The Detainment and "Faulty Information" (Sept 2002)

The Journey: On September 26, 2002, Maher Arar was changing planes in New York's JFK airport, returning home to Canada from a family vacation in Tunisia.

RCMP Role: The RCMP provided American authorities with information that Arar was an Islamic extremist linked to Al-Qaeda. A federal inquiry later found this information was inaccurate, portrayed him in an unfair fashion, and heavily overstated his importance.

Detention: U.S. authorities detained Arar for 12 days in New York, holding him in solitary confinement and denying him access to a lawyer.

Arar was released on October 5, 2003, 374 days after his removal to Syria. He returned to Canada, reuniting with his wife and children. The couple moved to Kamloops, in British Columbia, where his wife Monia accepted a job as professor at Thompson Rivers University. The couple later moved back to Ottawa. Back in Canada, Arar claimed that he had been tortured in Syria and sought to clear his name, embarking on legal challenges both in Canada and in the United States as well as a public education campaign. Arar received a PhD in electrical engineering from the University of Ottawa in 2010.

The Mango Cafe in Ottawa

Canadian government apology and settlement

On January 26, 2007, after months of negotiations between the Canadian government and Arar's Canadian legal counsel, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology to Arar on behalf of the Canadian government, apologizing "for any role Canadian officials may have played in what happened to Mr. Arar, Monia Mazigh and their family in 2002 and 2003" and announced that Arar would receive C$10.5 million settlement for his ordeal and an additional one million for legal costs.

In Canada, Arar's ordeal has raised numerous questions that have yet to be answered. Canadian authorities have been unable to discover who leaked sensitive government documents to O'Neill. Those who were involved in the case in the RCMP have not been reprimanded by the government for their mistakes. In fact, several have received promotions.

As of December 2006, the only person held accountable in Canada has been RCMP Commissioner Giuliano Zaccardelli, who resigned over contradictions in his testimony to the House of Commons Committee on Public Safety and National Security. The contradictions were with respect to what he knew at the time and what he told government ministers.

2. Extraordinary Rendition to Syria (Oct 2002 – Oct 2003)

Rendition: Despite his requests to be returned to Canada, the U.S. government sent Arar to Syria—a country known for torture—via Jordan. This process is known as "extraordinary rendition".
Torture: In Syria, Arar was held for 10 months in a "grave-like" cell, where he was beaten with electric cables and psychologically tortured.
False Confession: To stop the torture, Arar gave a false confession stating he had trained in Afghanistan, a place he had never visited.
Release: The Syrian government eventually determined Arar was innocent and released him on October 5, 2003, after 374 days in captivity.

3. Investigation and Official Apology (2004–2007)

The Inquiry: In 2004, the Canadian government established a Commission of Inquiry led by Justice Dennis O'Connor to investigate the role of Canadian officials.
Findings: The 2006 report found:
No evidence that Arar had any links to terrorism.
The RCMP provided "faulty" and "inaccurate" information to the U.S..
Canadian officials failed to communicate properly and improperly shared intelligence with Syrian authorities, even after they knew Arar was being tortured.

The Apology: Following the report, then-RCMP Commissioner Giuliano Zaccardelli publicly apologized for the RCMP's role and later resigned.
Settlement: In January 2007, Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology to Arar, and the Canadian government paid $10.5 million in compensation plus legal costs.

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4. Post-Case Developments

U.S. Inaction:
The United States refused to participate in the Canadian inquiry, never formally apologized, and kept Arar on a terror watch list for years following the incident.

Criminal Charges:
In 2015, the RCMP laid criminal charges in absentia against a Syrian intelligence officer for the torture of Arar.

The case became a major scandal in Canada, highlighting the dangers of information-sharing without adequate oversight in the "War on Terror" era.

Robert Dziekański Taser Case (2007):

The death of a Polish immigrant at Vancouver International Airport, who was shocked multiple times with a Taser by RCMP officers, sparked a massive controversy over the use of force. Two officers were later convicted of perjury regarding their testimony.

The death of Robert Dziekański on October 14, 2007, was a landmark case in Canadian history that fundamentally changed how police use Tasers and how incidents of police misconduct are investigated.

What Happened: The Timeline

Arrival and Confusion:
Robert Dziekański, a 40-year-old Polish immigrant who spoke no English, arrived at Vancouver International Airport (YVR) to join his mother. Due to a series of administrative errors and a massive language barrier, he was left wandering the secure customs area for nearly 10 hours.

The Incident:
Exhausted and distraught, Dziekański eventually began acting out in frustration, throwing a small table and a computer. Airport security called the RCMP, and four officers arrived at 1:28 AM.

The Confrontation:

Within 30 seconds of encountering Dziekański, and without any meaningful attempt to de-escalate the situation or communicate in Polish, the officers deployed a Taser.
The Death: Dziekański was shocked five times in total. He was then pinned and handcuffed; he became unconscious almost immediately and died at the scene from a heart attack induced by the electrical shocks and physical struggle.

The Controversy and The Video

The RCMP initially reported that Dziekański was aggressive, that they had only used the Taser twice, and that he was standing when he was shocked. However, a bystander named Paul Pritchard had filmed the entire incident.

The Pritchard video clearly showed:

Dziekański with his hands up and not acting aggressively when the first Taser was fired.
The officers shocking him while he was already on the ground.
A lack of medical assistance or de-escalation efforts.

Legal Consequences

The Braidwood Inquiry concluded that the use of force was "not justified" and that the officers had "deliberately misrepresented" their actions.

Officer	Role	Legal Outcome
Kwesi Millington	Fired the Taser	Convicted of perjury; sentenced to 30 months.
Benjamin (Monty) Robinson	Ranking officer	Convicted of perjury; sentenced to 2 years.
Bill Bentley	Attending officer	Acquitted of perjury.
Gerry Rundel	Attending officer	Acquitted of perjury.

Lasting Impact

The case led to the creation of the Independent Investigations Office (IIO) in British Columbia, ensuring that police would no longer investigate their own officers in cases of death or serious injury. It also resulted in an unconditional apology from the RCMP and strict new nationwide protocols for Taser use.

POLICE

Oka Crisis (1990):

The RCMP was involved in the 78-day standoff with the Mohawk community at Kanesatake, providing support to the Sûreté du Québec.

The 1990 Oka Crisis (or Kanehsatà:ke Resistance) was a 78-day standoff (July 11 – September 26, 1990) between the Mohawk community of Kanesatake, the Quebec provincial police (Sûreté du Québec - SQ), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and the Canadian Armed Forces. It was sparked by a land dispute over the proposed expansion of a golf course and townhouses onto sacred Mohawk burial grounds known as "The Pines".

Here is what happened during the crisis:

1. The Initial Confrontation (July 11, 1990)
Barricades:
In March 1990, Mohawks set up a blockade to prevent developers from clearing "The Pines".

Police Raid: On July 11, the SQ attempted to dismantle the blockade using tear gas and stun grenades.

Fatal Shootout: Gunfire was exchanged, resulting in the death of 31-year-old SQ Corporal Marcel Lemay. The police retreated, leaving behind several vehicles.

Escalation: Following the death of the officer, tensions rose, and Mohawk warriors from other communities (Kahnawake and Akwesasne) joined the resistance, strengthening the barricades.

Members of the SQ, 3 September 1990

Intervention by the Canadian Armed Forces

Nightly gatherings at the blockaded Mercier Bridge grew in size and violence, adding to the pressure put on SQ forces, leading the Quebec premier Robert Bourassa to announce that in accord with Section 275 of the National Defence Act, he was requisitioning military support from the Canadian Armed Forces on August 27. The same day Mulroney appointed Quebec Chief Justice Alan B. Gold as special mediator to negotiate an agreement with the protesters.

On August 28, press conferences were held by military leadership to announce the upcoming intervention and by Mulroney to denounce the actions of the protesters. Lieutenant-General Kent Foster announced the upcoming use of three Leopard tanks and that Brigadier-General Armand Roy was given full autonomy to attack at will with the objective of obtaining "unconditional surrender" from the Warriors. In response, families with children and elderly members attempted to flee Kahnawá꞉ke, and were met at the barricades by a crowd throwing stones. Though the SQ had guaranteed safety for the evacuees, they did not attempt to stop the crowd from breaking windshields and windows.[citation needed] Several people were wounded. The car in which Mohawk elder Joe Armstrong, 71, was riding was hit with a projectile that shattered the windshield; the next day, Armstrong suffered a fatal heart attack that doctors attributed to stress.

2. The Standoff and Role of Police/Military

Blockade of Mercier Bridge:

In sympathy with the Kanesatake Mohawks, Mohawks in Kahnawake blocked the Mercier Bridge, a vital commuter artery into Montreal.

SQ and RCMP Involvement:

The SQ set up their own blockades around the area. By mid-July, the RCMP were brought in to assist the SQ, but they struggled to control the escalating tensions and violent, racially charged encounters.

Military Deployment:

On August 6, the Quebec government requested help from the Canadian Armed Forces. By August 20, over 4,000 soldiers (including the Royal 22e Régiment - "Van Doos") were deployed.

Military Takeover:

The military moved in to replace the SQ, pushing their armored vehicles to within meters of the Mohawk lines.

3. Resolution and Aftermath (September 26, 1990)

The End:

The siege ended on September 26, 1990, when the remaining Mohawk protesters burned their weapons and left the treatment center where they had taken refuge.
Violence at Surrender: During the final hours, a 14-year-old Mohawk girl, Waneek Horn-Miller, was stabbed in the chest with a soldier's bayonet while holding her younger sister. She survived, but the incident highlighted the brutality of the conflict.

Outcome:

The planned golf course expansion was cancelled, and the federal government bought "The Pines" to prevent development.

Lingering Issues:

While the immediate development was stopped, the land was not returned to the Mohawks and the issue of land ownership remained largely unresolved for years, leading to continued legal challenges.
The Oka Crisis is considered a turning point in Canadian history, bringing issues of Indigenous land rights and sovereignty into the national spotlight.

Indigenous Relations and "Reign of Terror":

Historical and modern, the RCMP has been criticized for its actions toward Indigenous communities, including the killing of thousands of Inuit-owned sled dogs in the 1950s-70s, which was a subject of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission.

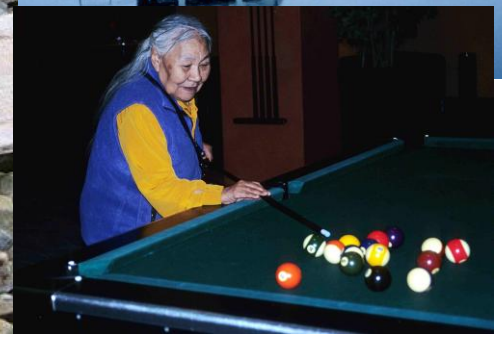
Between the 1950s and the 1970s, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and other government authorities in the Canadian Arctic killed thousands of Inuit-owned sled dogs (qimmiit), causing profound cultural, economic, and emotional devastation to Inuit communities.
This period is remembered by many Inuit as a "reign of terror," resulting in a loss of mobility and forced dependency on settled communities.

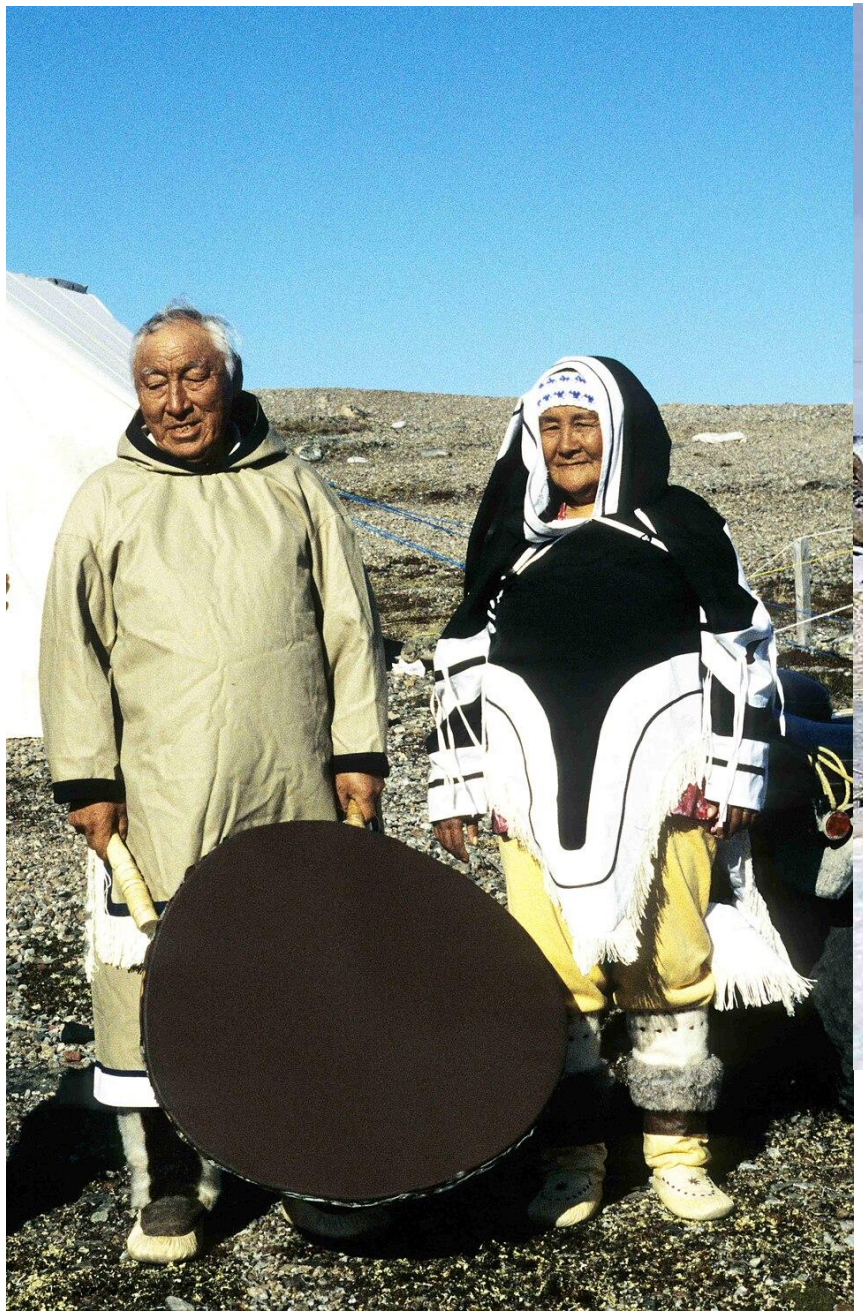
What Happened: **Key Details**
Mass Killing:
Thousands of dogs—essential for hunting, travel, and survival—were shot or otherwise destroyed across the Arctic, including Nunavik (northern Quebec) and the Qikiqtani region (Baffin Island).

Methods of Destruction: **Inuit witnesses testified that police often shot dogs indiscriminately, including dogs that were chained or even harnessed to sleds, sometimes leaving families stranded without food or transportation.**

The Rationale:
Authorities justified the killings under the pretext of public health and safety, citing risks from rabies, disease outbreaks, or dogs roaming loose in new, permanent settlements.

The Impact: The loss of the dogs destroyed the traditional, nomadic way of life, forcing Inuit to abandon hunting camps and move into permanent, government-established settlements, leading to increased poverty, reliance on welfare, and food insecurity.





Inuit cabin built for use while on the land hunting and fishing

Square Dance from the time of Scottish whalers, which today the Inuit dance in many variations

Canadian Eskimo Dogs need a very large amount of exercise. They cannot just be walked, they need higher intensity work, requiring more exercise than many dog owners can give. This need for work and stimulation makes them well-suited for dog sports, such as carting, mushing, and skijoring. They are very trainable and submissive, unlike many spitz breeds, as well as intelligent. **The Canadian Eskimo Dog is best kept in a cold climate, and is prone to heatstroke.** Its coat is fairly easy to care for most times of the year, needing brushing only one or two times a week. However, when it sheds (which happens once a year) it will need grooming every day.

Qikiqtani Truth Commission Findings

The Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC), initiated by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) after rejecting a 2006 RCMP self-investigation, found that while there was no evidence of a secret, written government policy to kill the dogs, the RCMP's actions were part of a broader, colonial, and coercive approach that forced Inuit into settled, sedentary lives.

The QTC found that the slaughter was often:

Unnecessary:
Many dogs did not pose a real threat.

Mismanaged:
Laws concerning animal control were not properly explained to Inuit.

Discriminatory:
Inuit dogs were targeted, while dogs belonging to the RCMP or Hudson's Bay Company were often spared.

Apologies and Reconciliation

Quebec Apology (2011):

The Quebec government apologized for the dog slaughter in Nunavik, which was carried out by provincial police, and provided compensation.

Federal Apology (2019/2024):

The Government of Canada apologized for the RCMP's role in the killings in Nunavut (2019) and in Nunavik (2024).

Compensation: In 2024, the federal government announced a $45 million settlement in compensation for the Nunavik dog slaughter.

The destruction of the dogs is regarded as a major act of colonial disruption, leaving lasting, intergenerational trauma.